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VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AMONG THE POETS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Dorothy E. Bundy

ENTITLED Varieties of Religious Experience among the Poets of the Seventeenth Century

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Religion was a very important influence upon literature of the seventeenth century. Because of the controversy between the Royalists and the Puritans, much of the work produced was prose argument dealing with religious questions. Books 6, 7, and 8 of Hooker's Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Browne's Religio Medici, Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying, Hobbes' Leviathan, Milton's The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth, and Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, some of the greatest writings of the period, all deal with religion.

We naturally associate poetry and religion together because they are concerned with the expression of the ideal. As might be expected, a great deal of poetry was produced in this age. Some of it was secular, showing the lighter strain of poetic thought, but the religious poems were just as important.

A certain amount of work has been done on the subject of seventeenth century religious poetry. The Reverend C.J. Abbey, author of Religious Thought in Old English Verse, has investigated the possibility of tracing in the poetry the sectarian struggle. In stating his conclusion, he said that at times it would be difficult to determine from internal evidence to which party the poet belonged, adding, "Often again, although the theological views of the author are obvious enough, they serve chiefly to tone the feeling and colour the language with-

out in any way withdrawing the poem as a whole from that common stock of Christian literature in which all may find sympathy and interest."[1]

In studying the poets, W. J. Courthope[2] has classified them according to the various schools of thought. Giles Fletcher, according to this classification, represents the theological school of wit, John Donne, the metaphysical, and William Drummond, the courtly. In the school of theological wit under Charles I, Mr. Courthope included Francis Quarles, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, and Henry Vaughan.

Essays on the lives and writings of the more important poets, such as Herbert, Donne, Vaughan, and Milton, have necessarily included their religious views. Their principal belief's have been stated, giving in some cases their reasons for joining or for taking orders in a certain church. Nothing has been done, however, on the subject of their religious experiences. A discussion of this subject would show the effect produced by their religious beliefs upon their feelings and temperaments. It is obvious that such an experience would affect their religious poetry. In this period especially, since religion was the dominating influence, the result would be of significance. This essay will bring together for the first time these poets of the seventeenth century in order to examine their religious experiences as shown in their poetry.

Since the importance of religion as the most powerful

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1. Abbey, C. J.; Religious Thought in Old English Verse. London, 1892, pp. v-vi.

2. Courthope, W. J.; A History of English Poetry. New York 1903, Volume III.

factor in the seventeenth century was due to the struggle between the Anglicans and the Puritans, it is necessary to define the distinction between the characteristic opinions and religious interests of these two parties. The Anglican ideal was that of piety and purity, a cultivation of the spirit of faith and church worship. The Church of England had, of course, developed after the separation from the Roman Catholic church, their close relation being shown by the stress which the Anglicans laid upon the symbolic beauty of church service.

The Puritans turned their attention to the life beyond, meditating upon the sins of this world and upon death. In religious works of the thirteenth century this had been a common characteristic. Descriptions of heaven and of hell, however, had been more materialistic, depicted in all the colors of medieaval fancy. After a few centuries in which the elements of melancholy and despair were less evident, and in which much more cheerfulness was found, the Puritans were arousing the people by these same methods. Their inwardness of spirit led them to stress, not faith as the Anglicans did, but certain aspects of good works, such as asceticism and refraining from worldliness.

In approaching a study of the religious experiences of men in this age, it would be quite natural to assume that one of the most important forces was this sectarian struggle. How important it really was can be determined only by investigation. Since, with just one exception - Milton, all of the poets to be discussed were of the same political party, it might be supposed that their ideas and their experiences would be somewhat similar. A comparison will determine the

chief characteristics, pointing out in what ways the experiences are similar and in what ways they differ.

CHAPTER II

POETS BEFORE THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND PURITANS.

Giles Fletcher, a pious and devout man, led a peaceful and uneventful life as rector in a small parish. Although he shared in the literary talent of his family, his father being Giles Fletcher the elder, a poet of some renown, and his brother the author of The Purple Island, he would have been no better known for his writings than for his work in the church, if it had not been for one poem, Christ's Victory and Triumph.

Giles Fletcher was born about 1588. The exact date of his birth is not known, nor is the place, although it is supposed to be London. He was educated at Cambridge, where he received his inspiration for writing, and where he composed a few verses. Taking orders in the Church of England, he spent the remaining years of his life in his parish, Alderton in Suffolk. He died in 1623.

His great poem, Christ's Victory and Triumph, published in 1610, shows the characteristics of the age. It is an allegory divided into four parts,- Christ's victory in heaven, on earth, over death, and after death. Allegory was a form that had been popular, but about this time it was becoming an older style. In the first part Mercy and Justice, personified, are pleading before God. In demanding that the wicked receive their due punishment, Justice says,

"What need I vrge, what they must needs
confesse,
Sentence on them, condemn'd by their owne
lust?
I crave no more, and Thou canst give no
lesse,
Then death to dead men, iustice to vniust;
Shame to most shamefull, and most shameles
dust:
But if Thy mercie needs will spare her
friends,
Let Mercie there begin where Iustice endes.
Tis cruel Mercie that the wrong from right
defends."[1]

Mercy, appealing to God's love for man, pleads,

"And these as Iustice hates, so I deplore;
But the vp-plowed heart, all rent and tore,
Though wounded by it selfe, I gladly would
restore.[2]
Must all goe by desert. is nothing free.
Ah! if but those that onely woorthy be,
None should Thee ever see, none should Thee
ever see."[3]

As indicated by Mr. Courthope in his classification of the poets, one of the greatest tendencies of the age was that towards intellectuality. That Fletcher is one of the "wits" is shown by the debate between the two personified characters. It is evident that the result of such a style would not be naturalness, but studied comparisons and artificial conceits as illustrated in this passage:

"He is a path, if any be misled,
He is a robe, if any naked bee;
If any chaunce to hunger, He is bread,
If any be a bondman, He is free,
If any be but weake, howe strong is Hee!
To dead men life He is, to sicke men health,
To blinde men sight, and to the needie wealth;
A pleasure without losse, a treasure without
stealth."[4]

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1. Giles Fletcher; Complete Poems. Edited by Alexander B. Grosart. London, 1876. p. 141.
2. Ibid, 154.
3. Ibid, 156.
4. Ibid, 156.

Antithesis was a usual device, one used by Fletcher in telling of the crucifixion of Christ in the third part of the poem. The following lines show the unnatural effect:

> A man was first the author of our fall,
> A man is now the author of our rise;
> A garden was the place we perisht all,
> A garden is the place He payes our price;
> And the Old Serpent with a nerve deuise,
> Hath found a way himselfe for to beguile:
> So he, that all men tangled in his wile,
> Is now by one man caught, beguil'd with
> his own guile.[1]

At times the result is more pleasing because of an artistic touch not seen in the preceding stanza.

> And the pale starres, strucke with unwonted
> fright,
> Quenched their everlasting lamps in night;
> And at His birth, as all the starres heav'n
> had
> Wear not enough, but a newe star was made,
> So now, both newe and old and all, away did fall.[2]

In Fletcher's work traits of a different character also are found. This may perhaps be due in part to his training at Cambridge University, for it was here that those dissenters who had been forced to leave the country when Catholic Mary was ruling, returned when Elizabeth became queen. Bringing back with them from Geneva Calvinistic theories concerning government and religion, Cambridge became the center for "semi-republican and anti-episcopal principles."[3] Although Fletcher did not accept all of these doctrines, it is quite natural that he would unconsciously acquire to some degree

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1. Fletcher; Complete Poems, 199.
2. Ibid, 207.
3. Courthope; History of English Poetry, III, 127.

the attitude of the Calvinists.

The subjects on which he wrote show this influence. He was deeply concerned with repentance and death, expressing his feelings passionately on this subject.

> Deepely, alas! empassioned she stood,
> To see a flaming brand tost up from hell,
> Bayling her heart in her owne lustfull blood,
> That oft for torment she would loudely yell;
> Nowe she would sighing sit, and nowe she fell
> Crouching upon the ground, in sackcloth trust:
> Early and late she prayed, and fast she must,
> And all her haire hung full of ashes, and of dust.[1]

In remorse for his past sins he desired death.

> The life, the which I once did love, I leave;
> The love, in which I once did live, I loath,
> I hate the light, that did my light bereaue:
> Both love, and life, I doe despise you both.
> O that one grave might both our ashes cloath!
> A love, a life, a light, I now obteine,
> Able to make my age growe young againe-
> Able to save the sicke and to reuiue the slaine.[2]

Closely connected with his penitence is his sorrow and remorse for what Christ has suffered in order to redeem our sins. In the poem even Satan taunts the soul for its ungratefulness.

> He gave thee life: why shouldst thou seeke to slay Him?
> He lent thee wealth: to feed thy avarice?
> He cal'd thee friend: what, that thou shouldst betray Him?
> He kis't thee, though He knew His life the price;
> He wash't thy feet: shouldst thou His sacrifice?
> He gave thee bread, and wine, His bodie, blood,
> And at thy heart, to enter in He stood;
> But then I entered in, and all my snakie brood.[3]

He shared the Puritans' hatred for a worldly life, writing as a sort of warning the terrors and horrors in store for the unsaved soul.

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1. Fletcher: Complete Poems, 152.
2. Ibid, 217-218.
3. Ibid, 211.

Thear is but two wayes for this soule to have,
When parting from the body, forth it purges;
To fly to heav'n, or fall into the grave,
Where whippes of scorpions with the stinging scourges
Feed on the howling ghosts, and firie surges
Of brimstone, rowle about the cave of night;
Where flames doe burne, and yet no sparke of light,
And fire both fries and freezes the blaspheming spright.[1]

These characteristics pointed out show not only that Giles Fletcher belonged to this intellectual age, but also that because of his tendency to write about the horrors of sin and of death, he had imbibed the Puritan spirit prevalent at the University of Cambridge.

Like, Fletcher, Doctor William Loe was one of the clergy of the church of England; and his fame, like Fletcher's, rests upon one literary work,- in the case of Loe, Songs of Sion. Very little is known of his life. The date and place of his birth have never been determined, but from his naming a certain knight as "my countryman of Kent",[2] it may be supposed that he was from this south-eastern county.. After having been educated at Oxford, he was made Master of the College School in Gloucester in 1600 , and five years later was made sub-dean. The most important part of his life, however, was spent in Hamburg, where he was the pastor of an English church for two years, from 1618 until 1620, or perhaps a little longer. From records in Lyson's Environs of London, A. B. Grosart has concluded that Doctor Loe was probably vicar of Wandsworth from 1631 until his death in 1645.[3]

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1. Fletcher; Complete Poems, 209.
2. Loe, William; Songs of Sion. London, 1870. (Miscellanies of The Fuller Worthies' Library. Edited by Alexander B. Grosart. Volume 36.) p.448.
3. Loe, Songs of Sion, 451.

The Songs of Sion is not a famous collection, but the poems are quite interesting. Loe metaphrased, and put into monosyllables, psalms, prayers, and Old Testament passages. He chose this simple style because he wanted even children to be able to understand the Scriptures. When he was writing, he probably had in mind people in Hamburg who had a scant knowledge of the English language. In the introduction to the metaphrases of Paul's prayers, he said, "Preaching is God's speach to you: prayer is ours to him."[1] The emphasis laid upon the style produced an unnaturalness.

Although this work was of such a nature that it required little originality of thought, his choice of subject was significant. One of his chief characteristics is his constant writing of the misery and awfulness of sin. The introduction to his first group of songs is,

> An hymne of song
> Of seaven strains, or strings
> set to the tone of seaven sobs, and
> sighes of a seaven times seaven sad
> soule for sinne, and is to be song in
> the time of
> I left mine hart to thee.[2]

In a letter to his friend Mr. William Walcot, a merchant at Hamburg, he displayed an earnest consideration in pleading for an early repentance.

> "For a mā to give his soule to his Creator when he sees he must dye," he writes, "his goods to the poore, when he sees he must part with them; and to forgoe our sinne, whe we can noe longer followe yt, are cold, yea unkind obediences. But for a young man to remember his creator in the daies of his youth, and in his best and strongest age to bequeath himself every day to God in prayer and praise, is that reasonable and seasonable sacrifice where with the Most High is most pleased."[3]

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1. Loe; Songs of Sion, 504.
2. Ibid, 469.
3. Ibid, 560.

Death is another topic which he treats with great feeling. Religion, he says, shows us how we may die well. He is fond of comparing the attitudes toward death held by the spiritual man and the worldling. An example is the first part of his introduction to a group of muses,- "Well beloved,

> There is nothing more comfortable to a spirituall minded ma then to muse and meditate of his departure hence into the blessed sight of Christ, in the other life: yet to a worldling that would build up a rest for his body here, and sing a requiem to his soule in this vale of teares, nothing is more fearefull and hiddeous then for him to heare death spoken of;"[1]

In one of his muses and thoughts he describes different ideas of death, using queer figures and comparisons.

> And what is death nowe dost those thinke
> But downe with all the stickes,
> Of which this earth and tent of ours
> Is made, that gainst God kickes.
>
> Death is the farewell of old frends
> Till they meete to be blest,
> Death is the iudge to quitt fro iayle,
> The soule that longs for rest.
>
> Death makes the corps of clay to sleepe,
> But wakes the soule to see;
> Death payes the debte and teares the bond,
> And all to sett thee free.
>
> There is a death of deaths my soule
> The death of hell and woe.
> But Christ, his death, hath payd for that;
> His word doth tell thee soe.
>
> O Christ, my soule doth thinke on thee,
> And thankes thee day and night,
> That those hast rid me fro this death,
> By thy great power and might.[2]

As was the case with Fletcher and other poets of this time, Loe was impressed with the sacrifice that Christ made for us.

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1. Loe; Songs of Sion, 486.
2. Ibid, 488-489.

Christ nowe hath paid the debt,
    The bond in two is rent,
The law, the curse, the woe, the crosse
    Is laid on him that's sent.
Loe Christ hath tane for thee
    Thy sinne, thy shame, thy crosse,
And rid thee from the hags of hell
    That would have wrought thy losse.[1]

Closely related to his ideas concerning sin and death is his "other-worldliness," as George Eliot would have called it. Here he shows a decidedly Puritan tendency: "I have ever hated (that) Epicurean resolution: 'Let us eate and drinke, to morrowe we shall dye.' But I have ever loved entyrely (that) Christian exhortacion: 'Let us pray, and praise God, to morrowe we shall live.' For to love, is to live, and where we love, there we live."[2] Most of his poetry is plain and simple, but he writes in a figurative and more artistic way when he defines life as "but a flower that fadeth, an hower that passeth, a shadow that departeth, a vanity that vexeth, a momet that waineth, a nothing when we have done all we can."[3]

The Puritans were fond of giving instructions and advice as to ways of living. Doctor Loe, in writing to his parishioners, admonishes them.

When foes doe curse, blesse them
    For Christ hath taught thee so;
Who prayd for such as did him kill
    And brought to curse and woe.[4]

The significance of Doctor William Loe's choice of subject is that he followed the tendency of this troublesome religious age and wrote of the sin and unimportance of this worldly life.

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1. Loe; Songs of Sion, 621.
2. Ibid, 533.
3. Ibid, 486-487.
4. Ibid, 614.

John Donne differed from Fletcher and Loe in that the early part of his life was quite worldly. Not a man of calm and naturally pious nature, he allied himself with the church only after a long struggle. He was born in 1573, the son of a prosperous London ironmonger, and was brought up as a Roman Catholic. A very precocious youth, he entered Oxford at the age of eleven and later went to Cambridge. He did not receive a degree at either institution - probably because of his religion. Later he studied law at Lincoln's Inn, but he never made any practical use of this knowledge. Before he had finished this work, his father died. Donne now came into the possession of a good inheritance which he spent very recklessly and rapidly. His mother employed tutors for him who were not only to instruct him in mathematics and other sciences, but also to form his religious views. According to family tradition and early training, it was supposed that he would embrace the Catholic faith, but about this time he discontinued his other studying and devoted himself to the controversy between the Romanists and the Protestants. The result was his accepting finally the Anglican principles.

After traveling on the continent for two years studying the laws and languages of Italy and Spain, he returned to England, becoming private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Keeper of the Great Seal. He was here for about five years until his secret marriage to the niece of Lady Egerton was discovered. The next few years after his dismissal were spent in poverty and misery, but later he and his wife were re-united, after which Donne entered the service of Robert Drury. He continued writing poetry, as had been his custom when with Thomas Egerton.

When traveling in France with Robert Drury, he decided to end the conflict which had long been troubling him: giving up his worldly ambitions, he took orders in the Church of England in 1615. He assisted in controversies with the Catholics, and was a popular preacher. The death of his wife in 1617 was a great blow to him, causing his mind to turn to deep and serious matters. In 1621 he was made Dean of St. Paul's. Charles I, who had urged him to take English orders, had resolved to make him a bishop; but Donne died March 31, 1631. Although he wrote a great deal of poetry, it was as the Dean of St. Paul's that Donne was known to his contemporaries.

His poetry may be classified according to the three periods of his religious life. First he was a Catholic, and as such wrote many of his poems, The Progress of the Soul and others. In this period very often his work was satiric. The second period is from the time when he changed his religious views until the death of his wife. His literary work then was chiefly intellectual. From 1617 until 1631 is by far his deepest and most sincere period. Some of his poetry written in his earlier days is very light. After his death when these poems were published by his son, many of his parishioners were shocked by his attitude toward love and religion.

The Progresseof the Souleis an illustration of his early work, a satire written from a Catholic point of view. The theme is the progress of the soul in heresy, traced from Cain to Calvin. Donne intended to show the soul resting finally in Elizabeth, - according to his estimation, the greatest of all heretics. The poem reflects Donne's bitter and sardonic mood. He labels the arguments of the Protestants heresy.

In the following lines he attacks Elizabeth's methods of encouraging the fishing trade by establishing more holy days:

> Is any kinde subject to rape like fish?
> Ill unto man they neither doe nor wish:
> Fishers they kill not, nor with noise awake;
> They doe not hunt, nor strive to make a prey
> Of beasts, nor their young sonnes to beare awaye;
> Foules they pursue not, nor do undertake
> To spoile the nests industrious birds do make;
> Yet them all these unkinde kinds feed upon,
> To kill them is an occupation,
> And lawes make Fasts, and hints for their destruction.[1]

After he gives up his Catholic views, he never speaks of Calvin but with great respect.

The end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth were the age of "wits". Donne's poetry, as well as that of his contemporaries, shows intellectual characteristics. In his fondness for complex religious speculation, he writes in a forced style. This is evident especially in the earlier periods of his life when his active and keen intellect directed his writing. An Elegie written in 1612 upon the death of Prince Henry is an illustration:

> Is th' other center, Reason, faster then?
> Where should we looke for that, now we'are not men?
> For if our Reason be'our connexion
> Of causes, now to us there can be none.
> For, as, if all the substances were spent,
> 'Twere madnesse, to enquire of accident,
> So is't to looke for reason, hee being gone,
> The onely subject reason wrought upon.
> If Fate have such a chaine whoe divers links
> Industrious man discerneth, as hee thinks;
> When miracle doth come, and so steale in
> A new linke, man knowes not, where to begin;
> At a much deader fault must reason bee,
> Death having broke off such a linke as hee
> But now, for us, with busie proofe to come,
> That we' have no reason, would prove wee had some.
> So would just lamentations: Therefore wee
> May safelyer say, that we are dead, then hee.
> So, if our griefs wee do not well declare,
> We' have double excuse; he' is not dead; and we are.[2]

1. John Donne; The Progresse of the Soule. Poems. Oxford, 1712. Edited by Herbert J.C. Grierson. Volume I, p. 306.
2. Donne: An Elegie. Poems. I. 269.

There is a somewhat different character, however, in his poetry of the last period. Then was he really interested in religion and made it his first consideration. His poems have a deeper and profounder spirit and a personal note that is not present in his satires and other early works. Naturally when he gave up his artificial treatment of religion and entered into it with sincerity, he would come into contact with other religious ideas. He displays passionate feeling in writing of the grimmer aspects of Christianity. This is shown in the Resurrection, one of the stanzas in LaCorona:

> Moist with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule
> Shall (though she now be in extreme degree
> Too stony hard, and yet too fleshly,) bee
> Freed by that drop, from being starv'd, hard,
> or foule,
> And life, by this death abled, shall controule
> Death, whom thy death slue; nor shall to mee
> Feare of frist or last death, bring miserie,
> If in thy little booke my name thou enroule,
> Flesh in that long sleep is not putrified,
> But made that there, of which and for which 'twas,
> Nor can by other meanes be glorified
> May then sinnes sleep, and deaths soone from me passe,
> That wak't from both, I againe risen may
> Salute the last, and everlasting day.[1]

He was impressed, as were all Puritans of the age, with the insignificance of man in relation to spiritual things. He compares the world to a carcass feeding the worms,- the people of the earth. To him, the chief characteristic of man is sin; even Christians are besieged by "hourly tempestuous persecutions."[2] He wonders why man, a sinful being and therefore weak, is master of all things on earth. He advocates a queer theory, that animals should fear God, not man:

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1. Donne; Resurrecton. Poems, I, 321.
2. Donne; The Confession. Poems, I, 342.

Why are wee by all creatures waited on?
Why doe the prodigall elements supply
Life and food to mee, being more pure then I,
Simple, and further from corruption?
Why brook'st thou, ignorant horse, subjection?
Why dost thou lull and bore so seelily
Dissemble weaknesse, and by 'one mans stroke die,
Whose whole kinde, you might swallow and feed upon?
Weaker I am, woe is mee, and worse then you,
You have not sinn'd, nor need be timorous.
But wonder at a greater wonder, for to us
Created nature doth these things subdue,
But their Creator, whom sin, nor nature tyed,
For us, his Creatures, and his foes, hath dyed.[1]

In the following lines he expresses his idea of worldly things:

And what essentiall joy can'st thou expect
Here upon earth? what permanent effect
Of transitory causes? Dost thou love
Beauty? (And beauty worthy'st is to move)
Poore consened consenor, that she, and that thou,
Which did begin to love, are neither now;
You are both fliud, chang'd since yesterday;
Next day repaires, (but ill) last dayes decay.
Nor are, (although the river keepe the name)
Yesterdaies waters, and to daies the same.[2]

His mind is ever filled with the horrible fate that awaits the wicked. He seems to realize that at one time he had had more wit than religion, a thought that makes him fear his fate, for he says,

When plenty, Gods image, and seale,
Makes us Idolatrous,
And love it, not him, whom it should
reveale,
When wee are mov'd to seeme religious
Only to vent wit, Lord deliver us.[3]

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1. Donne; Holy Sonnets, 327.
2. Ibid, The Second Anniversary, 262.
3. Ibid, The Litanie, Poems, I, 345.

Honor and despair seize him when he questions, "What if this present were the worlds last night?"[1] He becomes very penitent asking help from God lest his repentance would be too late. His anxiety is shown in these lines:

> Repaire me now, for now mine eye doth haste,
> I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,
> And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
> I dare not move my dimme eyes any way,
> Despaire behind, and death before doth cast
> Such terrour, and my feeble flesh doth waste
> By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh.[2]

These quotations have indicated that besides having the marks of effort and intellectuality characteristic of the age, Donne's poetry shows also the Puritan tendency to write of the fears and the horrors connected with life and death.

In George Herbert's life there was a struggle between worldly and spiritual desires similar to that in Donne's life, but it was more dominating than in Donne's case. Herbert has been called "holy George Herbert," but, as he shows in his poetry, he had a strong inclination towards affairs of the world. The result was many spiritual conflicts. From childhood he had realized that his life was to be dedicated to religion, but he seemed to dread the time of taking a definite stand. Not that he ever believed that he would not end the struggle by deciding for the church, but as he said, "My soul doth love thee, yet it loves delay."[3] His poem <u>Affliction</u> gives a summary of his conflict. At first he feels restless and dissatisfied, and in wondering says,

> Why do I languish thus, drooping and dull,
> As if I were all earth?
> O give me quicknesse that I may with mirth
> Praise thee brim-full.[4]

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(1) Donne; <u>Holy Sonnets</u>, 328.
(2) Ibid, 322.
(3) George Herbert; <u>English Works</u>. Boston and New York, 1905. Edited by George Herbert Palmer. Volume II, p. 328. (4) Ibid, III, 207.

He knows, however, that he can be happy only in the service of God. This idea he expresses in his exquisite poem, Peace.

Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell? I humbly crave
Let me once know.
I sought thee in a secret cave
And ask'd if Peace were there.
A hollow winde did seem to answer, no:
Go seek elsewhere.
I did, and going did a rainbow note.
Surely, thought I,
This is the lace of Peace's coat.
I will search out the matter.
But while I lookt, the clouds immediately
Did break and scatter.
Then went I to a garden and did spy
A gallant flower,
The crown Imperiall. Sure, said I,
But when I digg'd, I saw a worm devoure
What show'd so well.
At length I met a rev'rend good old man, whom when for Peace
I did demand, he thus began:
There was a Prince of old
At Salem dwelt, who liv'd with good increase of flock and fold.
He sweetly liv'd, yet sweetnesse did not save
His life from foes.
But after death out of his grave
There sprang twelve stalks of wheat;
Which many wondring at, got some of those
To plant and set.
It prosper'd strangely and did soon disperse
Through all the earth;
For they that taste it do rehearse
That virtue lies therein,
A secret virtue bringing peace and mirth
By flight of sinne.
Take of this grain which in my garden grows
And grows for you,
Make bread of it; and that repose
And peace which ev'y where
With so much earnestnesse you do pursue
Is onely there.[1]

He comes to his final decision knowing the pleasures which he must surrender, but, as he concludes in the following stanza, he loves God.

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(1) Herbert; English Works, II, 377-379.

I know the wayes of pleasure, the sweet strains,
The lullings and the relishes of it;
The propositions of hot blood and brains;
What mirth and musick mean; what love and wit
Have done these twentie hundred yeares and more;
I know the projects of unbridled store ;
My stuffe is flesh, not brasse; my senses live,
And grumble oft that they have more in me
Then he that curbs them being but one to five;
Yet I love thee.[1]

Herbert was born April 3, 1593 near Montgomery. He was of noble descent, his father being related to the Pembroke family and his mother, oneof the Newport family. His elder brother was the famous Lord Herbert of Cherbury. When George Herbert was four years of age his father died; but his mother, a woman of wisdom and capability, provided for the education of her sons. After having been instructed by his mother and a tutor, he entered Westminister School at the age of twelve. In 1609 he transferred to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he received his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1612 and of Master of Arts in 1616. From 1619 until 1627 he was Orator for the university.

Herbert had long hoped to secure a position at court, and in 1623 his favor with James was shown by his appointment to the sinecure lay rectorship at Whitford, worth one-hundred and twenty pounds a year. This encouraged his worldly ambitions, but his fortunes changed. The king died in 1626, Lord Bacon, one of his most influential friends, in 1626, and in 1627 occurred the death of his mother. When he realized that he could expect no political advancement, he decided to take holy orders.

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1. Herbert; English Works, II, 383.

Because of his mother's wishes, he had been studying divinity for several years. In 1626 he had been appointed lay prebendary of Leighton Ecclesia, a position he held until 1630 when he was ordained priest and became rector of Bemerton. In 1629 he was married to Jane Danvers, a relative of his step-father. As parish priest of Bemerton, he spent the rest of his life, and died in 1633.

Herbert's poems were not published until after his death, but they have ever since had great popularity. The Temple, or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations[a] is his principal work. In these poems Herbert proves himself to be the Church of England poet. As Dowden wrote, "Herbert's feeling for order and beauty was satisfied by that middle way between splendour and plainness which he found in the Anglican church:

> The mean thy praise and glory is,
> And long may be."[1]

All of his poems are permeated with his love and devotion for the church. The following lines show his spirit of worship, a characteristic Anglican spirit:

> Sev'n whole dayes, not one in seven
> I will praise thee.
> In my heart though not in heaven,
> I can raise thee.

. . . . . .

---

a. George Herbert Palmer, in his edition of the life and works of George Herbert published in New York, 1905, has arranged the poems as to groups so as to give the poet's development of thought and feeling. This order, however, will not be followed in this paper since the purpose is to point out certain characteristics.

1. Edward Dowden; Puritan and Anglican; Studies in Literature. London, 1901. p. 107.

Small it is in this poore sort
To enroll thee,
Ev'n eternitie is too short
To extoll thee.[1]

As the church poet, Herbert wrote religious lyrics. He is hardly the founder of this type of poem because Donne and others had written verse reflecting upon divine things, but to Herbert belongs the credit for developing this style. The other poets had not been so personal in their expressions.[2] His objection is not to the love poetry, but to the things loved, for he feels that poetry might well deal with religion. He states this idea in this manner:

O sacred Providence, who from end to end
Strongly and sweetly movest! Shall I write,
And not of thee through whom my fingers bend
To hold my quill? Shall they not do thee
right?[3]

In this idea he goes even so far as to believe that poor rhyme will be made good poetry if the feeling is there.

Mattens, one example of his lovely religious lyric poetry, is quoted here.

My God, what is a heart?
Silver, or gold, or precious stone,
Or starre, or rainbow, or a part
Of all these things, or all of them in one?
My God, what is a heart,
That thou shouldst it so eye and wooe,
Pouring upon it all thy art,
As if that thou hadst nothing els to do?

Indeed man's whole estate
Amounts (and richly) to serve thee
He did not heav'n and earth create,
Yet studies them, not him whom they be.
Teach me thy love to know,
That this new light which now I see,
May both the work and workman show.
Then by a sunne-beame I will climbe to thee[4]

1. Herbert; English Works, III, 399.
2. Herbert: English Works II, 277.
3. Ibid, III, 79.
4. Ibid, II, 285.

Throughout his religious poems, one of the chief faults is his tendency towards intellectualism. At times this leads him to the use of almost incongruous comparisons. The following quotation from The Church-Floore illustrates his exaggerated symbolism:

Mark you the floore? That square and speckled stone,
Which looks so firm and strong,
Is Patience.
And th' other black and grave, wherewith each one
Is checker'd all along
Humilitie.
The gentle rising which on either hand
Leads to the Quire above
Is Confidence.
But the sweet cement, which in one sure band
Ties the whole frame, is Love
and Charitie.[1]

This next poem, The Clasping of Hands, shows how forced his style becomes from an effort to be intellectual.

Lord, thou art mine, and I am thine,
If mine I am; and thine much more
Then I or ought or can be mine.
Yet to be thine doth me restore;
So that again I now am mine,
And with advantage mine the more
Since this being mine brings with it thine
And thou with me dost thee restore
If I without thee would be mine,
I neither should be mine or thine.

Lord I am thine, and thou art mine,
So mine thou art that something more
I may presume thee mine then thine
For thou didst suffer to restore
Not thee, but me, and to be mine
And with advantage mine the more.
Since thou in death was none of thine
Yet then as mine didst me restore
O be mine still! Still make me thine!
Or rather make no Thine and Mine![2]

His love for form is shown by the curious artificial and intellectual structure of many of his poems. Two notable examples are The Altar and Easter Wings, the lines of which are so arranged that they form an altar and a pair of wings,

(1) Herbert; English Works, III, 167.
(2) Herbert; English Works, III, 37.

respectively. Sometimes the rhyme scheme is remarkable as in Paradise, where the rhymes are grow, row, ow; start, tart, art; spare, pare are; and frend, rend, end. In Jesu a pun is made on the words Jesu and I ease you. The idea of three may be seen in the poem Trinitie Sunday, as given here:

Lord who has form'd me out of mud,
And hast redeem'd me through thy bloud,
And sanctified me to do good.

Purge all my sinnes done heretofore;
For I confesse my heavie score,
And I will strive to sinne no more.

Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
With faith, with hope, with charitie
That I may runne, rise, rest with thee.[1]

In spite of his strong Anglican tendencies, we can see that in George Herbert there are traces of the Puritan influences so dominant in the seventeenth century. Palmer speaks of "the separatist notions under which Herbert for the most part thought of God, conceiving Him not as immanent in human affairs, but as detached and hostile."[2] His God is opposed to all earthly attachments.[3]

Herbert shows also the individualism of Puritanism. It is the relation between his own soul and God that interests him. Of all his poems, The Sacrifice, a dramatic dialogue, is his only one put directly into the mouth of another. The rest give from his heart his personal thought in relation to his God. This idea is illustrated in the following lines from The H. Communion:

But by the way of nourishment and strength
Thou creep'st into my breast,
Making thy way my rest,
And thy small quantities my length
Which spread their forces into every part,
Meeting sinnes force and art.[4]

---

1. Herbert; English Works, II, 161.
2. Ibid, III, 174.
3. Ibid, 173.
4. Ibid, II, 195.

One aspect of Herbert's individualism is his unconscious disregard of humanitarianism.[a] He does not feel bound by any ties to see that other people have the advantages of his spiritual blessings, although he would like them to have his experience. The Invitation shows that he is concerned with a regard for humanity, but it is merely a good will, not devotion:

> Lord, I have invited all
> And I shall
> Still invite, still call to thee
> For it seems but just and right
> In my sight,
> Where is all, there all should be.[1]

The ethical passages in his poetry are didactic in character. The Church Porch has less of religion than of common sense advice concerning wit, dress, play, friendship, and conduct in general. He writes,

> Lie not; but let thy heart be true to God,
> Thy mouth to it, thy actions to them both.[2]

> A civil guest
> Will no more talk all, then eat all, the feast.[3]

> Love God and love your neighbor. Watch and pray.
> Do as ye would be done unto.[4]

Herbert is impressed with the unimportance of earthly joy, which he compares to a bubble. The Pulley, one of the most famous of all his poems, tells us that we may have many blessings here, but only in the next life may we find our desired rest. The vanity of this world is shown in the following poem, Dotage, which portrays his morbid character in comparing pleasures and sorrows.

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a. Humanitarianism is used here in the general sense of promoting welfare of others, and of preserving them from pain and discomfort.
1. Herbert; English Works. III, 51.
2. Ibid, II, 23.
3. Ibid, 51.
4. Ibid, III, 99.

False glazing pleasures, casks of happinesse
    Foolish night-fires, women's and children's wishes,
Chases in Arras, guilded emptinesse,
Shadows, well mounted, dreams in a career,
    Embroider'd lyes, nothing between two dishes;
    These are the pleasures here.

True earnest sorrows, rooted miseries,
    Anguish in grain, vexations ripe and blown,
Sure-footed griefs, solid calamities,
Plain demonstrations, evident and cleare,
    Fetching their proofs ev'n from the very bone;
    These are the sorrows here.

But oh the folly of distracted men,
    Who griefs in earnest, joyes in jest pursue;
Preferring, like brute beasts, a lothsome den
Before a court, ev'n that above so deare,
    Where are no sorrows, but delights more time,
    Then miseries are here![1]

Sin is a theme seldom absent from his mind. He writes warnings against boasting, swearing, intemperance, and avarice. In Self-Condemnation he writes that popularity with the multitude and love of gold are far greater factors than the love for Christ in determining our actions. Three of the stanzas are given here.

Thou who condemnest Jewish hate
For choosing Barabbas, a murderer,
    Before the Lord of Glorie,
Look back upon thine own estate,
Call home thine eye (that busie wanderer),
    That choice may be thy storie.

He that doth love, and love amisse,
This world's delights before true Christian joy,
    Hath made a Jewish choice.
The world an ancient murderer is;
Thousands of souls it hath, and doth destroy
    With her enchanting voice.

He that hath made a sorrie wedding
Between his soul and gold, and hath preferr'd
    False gain before the true,
Hath done what he condemnes in reading;
For he hath sold for money his deare Lord,
    And is a Judas-Jew.[2]

In misery because of his sins, he makes a passionate appeal to

1. Herbert; English Works. III, 137.
2. Herbert, English Works, III, 111.

God for relief, as shown in these lines from Sighs and Groans.

> But O reprieve me!
> For thou hast life and death at thy command.
> Thou art both Judge and Saviour, feast and rod.
> Cordiall and Corrosive. Put not thy hand
> Into the little box, but O my God
> My God relieve me![1]

Some of his most passionate verses are those declaring his fear of the Judgment Day. He is surprised and grieved by any delay or cessation of repentance, questioning,

> Canst be idle? Canst thou play,
> Foolish soul, who sinn'd to-day? [2]

Realizing that his life has been useless, he is filled with despair from which he is relieved only after he comes to accept this unrest and dissatisfaction, - the struggle dominating his whole life. This he expresses in the following lines taken from his poem, The Crosse.

> What is this strange and uncouth thing?
> To make me sigh, and seek, and fain, and die,
> Untill I had some place where I might sing,
> And serve thee; and not onely I,
> But all my wealth and familie might combine
> To set thy honour up as our designe.
> . . . . . .
> Ah my deare Father, ease my smart!
> These contrarieties crush me. These crosse actions
> Doe winde a rope about, and cut my heart.
> And yet since these thy contradictions
> Are properly a crosse felt by thy sonne-
> With but foure words, my words, Thy will be done.[3]

George Herbert, the church of England poet, combined with his Anglican characteristics Puritan influences,-his fondness for writing of sin and the terrors of the Judgment Day and his emphasis upon one's personal relation to his God.

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(1) Herbert; III, 279.
(2) Herbert: English Works, III, 139.
(3) Ibid, 231-233.

CHAPTER III

POETS DURING THE CONFLICT

In 1642 the religious situation, which had been grave for years, developed into Civil War. Then was everyone forced to form his opinion concerning religion and government. All the men to be discussed in this chapter were directly concerned with the conflict, most of them taking active parts in it.

Francis Quarles was one of the most ardent Royalists of the period. An enthusiastic admirer of the king, he denounced the parliamentarians. The plundering of his property by the army is said to have so grieved him as to hasten his death. Quarles led a very active life. He was born in 1592 at the manorhouse of Stewards near Romford. His parents were of the landed gentry of this south-eastern county. He was sent to Cambridge, where in 1608 he took his degree at Christs' College. For several years he studied law at Lincoln's Inn. When Elizabeth, daughter of James I, went to Heidelberg, Quarles accompanied her, serving as cup bearer from 1613 until 1619. Ten years later he went to Ireland and was secretary to Archbishop Ussher for four years. In 1639 he was made chronologer to the city of London.

Contrary to what might be expected from his life of public affairs, it was the production of religious literature in which he was chiefly interested. A Feast for Worms, Hadassa, and Sion's Elegies were his earliest works, but the last one, Divine Emblems, appearing in 1635, is by far his most popular book. Quarle's style is that of his age, intellectual and

full of conceits. When artificiality is not present, his verse is pleasing, but his fondness for comparisons leads him to the exaggerated use of figures. In the following passage of ten lines there are three different examples, all describing life:

> His span of life and beauties like a flower,
> Faire flourishing, and fading in an hower.
> He breakes into the World with Teares, and then
> Departs with Griefe nor knowing How, nor When.
> His life's a Bubble, full of seeming Blisse,
> The more it lengthens the more short it is;
> Begot in darknesse, hee's brought forth, and cryes
> For succour, passes ore the Stage, and dyes;
> Yet, like a Moale, the earth he undermines,
> Making the World, the Forge of his designes.[1]

One of his favorite subjects is sin, which he compares with the stars, the mountains, the sands of the sea, and showers. It is not unusual for these comparisions to be so extravagant that they are ridiculous. An example is the following stanza from Divine Fancies.

> My Sinnes are like the hayres upon my head,
> And raise their Audit to as high a score;
> In this they differ; These doe dayly shed,
> But, ah, my sinnes grow dayly more and more:
> If, by my Hayres thou number out my sinnes, [2]
> Heav'n make me bald, before that day begins.

Although as an intellectual poet, he expresses his ideas well at times, often his reasoning becomes too involved, artificial, and pedantic for poetry. The result is a passage like the following.

> A Thousand yeares, with God (the Scriptures say)
> Are reckon'd but a day;
> By which accompt, this measur'd life of our
> Exceeds not much an hower;
> The halfe whereof Nature does claime and keepe
> As her owne debt for sleepe:
> A full sixt part or what remaines, we ryot
> In more then needfull Dyet:
> Our Infancy, our childhood, and the most
> Of our greene youth is lost:
> The little that is left, we thus divide;

---

1. Francis Quarles; Complete Works in Prose and Verse. Edited by Alexander B. Grosart. Edinburgh, University Press, 1880. Volume II, p.121.
2. Ibid, 226.

One part to cloathe our Pride,
Another Share we lavishly deboyse
To vaine, or sinfull Ioyes;
If then, at most, the measur's life of Man
Be counted but a span,
Being half'd and quarter'd, and disquarter'd thus,
What, what remaines for us?
Lord, if the Totall of our dayes doe come
If so, so poore a summe;
And if our shares so small, so nothing be,
Out of that Nothing, what remaines to Thee?[1]

In spite of his great loyalty to Charles I and his enmity to the Puritans, he had many qualities of this hated party. His style shows the mark of this influence by his tendency to offer advice and instructions concerning conduct. He comments upon the relation of selfishness to a good deed in this stanza:

He that relieves his brother in distresse
And seeks no vaine Applause, do's nothing lesse
Then lend to his Redeemer, laying downe,
A worthlesse Counter, to take up a Crowne:
But if vain-glory prompt thy tongue to boast,
It is not lent, Glorioso; 'Tis but lost.[2]

Even in his narrative poems we find that he often digresses from his story to give us some warning, as in the History of Samson when he tells us that God punishes us because we do not perform our duty. He writes,

God strikes because your swords, and You are idle;
Graunt, Lord, that every one may mend a fault;[3]
And then our Magistrates may stand for nought.

His poems are treatments of subjects popular in this time-

-death, the death of Christ, the world's temptation,
Heavens joy, hels torment.[4]

Often he drops his affected style and seems to have the Puritan characteristic of passionate expression. The following lines, showing how impressed he was by the awfulness of sin, profess extreme sorrow and repentance for his acts:

1. Quarles; Complete Works, II, 239.
2. Ibid, 249.
3. Ibid, 158.
4. Ibid, 33.

My weather-beaten Soule long time has bin
Be calm'd, and hiding in the Sea of Sin;
But now Afflictions' Storme does drive and tosse
Her batter'd Keele: The wind is loud and crosse:
Feare fills her tatter'd Sailes, and doubt doe drive her,
She knowes not where; and of all hopes deprive her:
Thus, thus transported by the troubled Ayre
Amongst the swallowing quick-sands of despaire,
If not prevented by a greter power,
She looks for wreck and ruine ev'ry hower;
O, that mine Eyes could raine a Shoure of Teares,
That, that would lay the Storme of all my Feares.[1]

Closely connected to his idea of penitence is that of the vanity of this world, well expressed in this stanza portraying his serious and morbid nature:

At our Creation, but the Word was said,
And we were made:
No sooner were, but our false hearts did swell
With Pride, and feel:
How slight is Man! At what an easie cost
Hee's made and lost![2]

Quarles had acquired the Puritan spirit even in great detail, some of his ideas being the narrowest ones for which the Puritans were condemned. Their insistence upon a strict observance of the Sabbath is not unlike Quarles' thought in these lines:

Away my thoughts: Away my words, my deeds;
Away what ever nourishes and feeds
My frayle delights: Presume not to approach
Into my presence; dare not once t' encroach
Upon the hallowed Temple of my Soule;
Ye are not for this Day; y' are all too foule:
Abide yee with the Asse, till I goe yonder,
And cleave the Isaac of my heart in sunder:
I must goe sacrifice: I must goe pay,
I must performe my holy vowes today.[3]

Truly it would be difficult to find a quotation illustrating greater asceticism than this passage concerning dreams:

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1. Quarles; Complete Works, II, 246.
2. Ibid, 238.
3. Ibid, 225.

Who dreams a Sin, and not his dreams forbid it
An entertainment, sins as if he did it;
Which if thy slumb'ring Soule could not prevent,
Th' art safe, if thou hast dream'd thou didst repent.[1]

The old idea that an ardent Royalist and a pious religious nature were incompatible is without doubt disproved by the life and writings of Francis Quarles who shows even the extreme illiberalness of the Puritans in dealing with the sins of this world.

Contrasted with the busy career of Quarles is the peaceful and quiet life of William Drummond, better known as Drummond of Hawthornden. He was born in 1585 and was educated at the University of Edinburgh. In France he studied law, but in 1610 he returned to Scotland because of the death of his father. This event caused an important change in his life, for he inherited the family estate, Hawthornden. Giving up his studies, he settled down as a country gentleman and devoted himself to literature. The death of his fiancée in 1614 produced an effect of sadness lasting for several years. A loyal Scotsman, he was, of course, faithful to James I. He signed the Covenant, but it was because he could not do otherwise. Although the methods of Charles I in enforcing Episcopacy in Scotland were objectionable to him, the tyranny of the Parliamentarians was even more so. The execution of the king is said to have been so severe a shock to Drummond as to hasten his own death, which occurred in 1649.

His retirement at Hawthornden gave him opportunity for writing poetry, the most important book, Flowers of Sion, appearing in 1623. These poems are lyrics of sweet melody and beauty, but they have certain characteristics marking them as

1. Quarles; Complete Works, II, 247.

belonging to this seventeenth century. His fondness for figures and conceits produces the effect of artificiality. God is spoken of as "the architect of this great round" framing "this place visible."[1] An example of his forced style is the comparison in The World a Game, in which he says,

> This world a hunting is
> The prey poor man, the nimrod fine is Death;
> His speedy greyhounds are
> Lust, sickness, envy, care,
> Strife that ne'er falls amiss,
> With all those ills which haunt us while
> we breathe.
> Now, if by chance we fly
> Of these the eager chase,
> Old age with stealing pace
> Casts up his nets, and there we panting die.[2]

His similarity to the other intellectual poets may be seen in the obscure and involved way that he philosophizes. In An Hymn of the Fairest Fair he writes in this comprehensive style:

> Thou all sufficient omnipotent,
> Thou ever-glorious, most excellent,
> God various in names, in essence one,
> High art installed on a golden throne,
> Outreaching heaven's wide vasts, the bounds of nought,
> Transcending all the circles of our thought:
> With diamantine sceptre in thy hand,
> There thou giv'st laws, and dost this world command,
> This world of concords rais'd unlikely sweet
> Which like a ball lies prostrate at thy feet.[3]

There is an element of melancholy throughout Drummond's poems,- not the melancholy of despair but a gentle kind of sadness and deep thinking. This he expresses in the following lines:

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1. William Drummond; Poems. New York, 1904. The Muses' Library. Edited by Wm. C. Ward, p. 25.
2. Ibid, 27.
3. Ibid, 37.

Beneath a sable veil and shadows deep
Of unaccessible and dimming light,
In silence 'ebon clouds more black than night,
The world's great King his secrets hid doth keep:
Through those thick mists, when any mortal might
Aspires, with halting pace and eyes that weep
To pore and in his mysteries to creep,
With thunders he and lightnings blasts their sight.
O Sun invisible that dost abide
Within thy bright abysms, most fair, most dark,
Where with thy proper rays thou dost thee hide!
O ever-shining, never full-seen mark!
To guide me in life's night thy light me show,
The more I search of thee, the less I know.[1]

He shows this spirit especially in his treatment of sin and death. His idea concerning the wickedness of man is given in these two lines:

The dove the dove, the swan doth love the swan;
Nought so relentless unto man as man.[2]

His fondness for one theme is clearly indicated by the titles of some of his poems - Instability of Mortal Glory, Human Frailty, No Trust in Time, and World's Joys are Toys. He brings out the vanity of an earthly life by contrasting with our view, the truth,- that the world is "full of horrors, troubles, slights."[3] He teaches,

Not happy is that life
Which ye as happy hold,
No, but a sea of fears, a field of strife,
Charg'd on a throne to sit
With diadems of gold,
Preserv'd by force, and still observ'd
by wit.

Urging us to live each day as if it were our last, he becomes almost passionate in his plea for repentance in the following lines:

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1. Drummond: Poems, 25.
2. Ibid, 55.
3. Ibid, 29.
4. Ibid, 33.

"All ye, whose hopes rely
On God, with me amidst these deserts mourn;
Repent, repent, and from old errors turn."
Who listen'd to his voice, obey'd his cry?
Only the echoes, which he made relent,
Rung from their marble caves, "Repent,
repent!"[1]

In An Hymn of True Happiness he describes in great detail how we should act in order to attain the perfect life. Parts of this poem follow:

To heed each action so,
As ever in his sight,
More fearing doing ill than passive woe;
Not to seem other thing
Than what ye are aright,
Never to do what may repentance bring;

Not to be blown with pride,
Nor mov'd at glory's breath,
Which shadow like on wings of time doth glide;
So malice to disarm,
And conquer hasty wrath,
As to do good to those that work your harm;

To hatch no base desires
Or gold or land to gain,
Well pleas'd with what by virtue one acquires;
To have the wit and will
Consorting in one strain,
Than what is good to have no higher skill;

A love which, while it burns
The soul with fairest beams,
In that uncreated sun the soul it turns,
And makes such beauty prove,
That, if sense saw her gleams
All lookers on would pine and die for love.

Who such a life would live,
Ye happy even may call,
Ere ruthless Death a wicked end him give,
And after then when given,
More happy by his fall,
For humans, earth, enjoying angels, heaven.[2]

Although Drummond spent most of his life quietly in Scotland, he seems to have been influenced by the troublesome

1. Drummond; Poems, 9.
2. Ibid, 34-35.

time, for his religious poems are characterized by meditations on the melancholy aspects of a Christian life.

In his religion Richard Crashaw differs from the other poets treated in this essay. His case is the reverse of Donne's, who transferred his allegiance from Catholicism to Protestantism. Crashaw, born in London about 1613, was the son of an incumbent of Whitechapel. He was educated first at Charterhouse and then at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he obtained his degree in 1634. As fellow at Peterhouse he spent several years in studying and writing religious poetry, towards which he had been drawn by the reading of Herbert's Temple. Upon refusing to sign the Solemn League and Covenant, he was forcibly ejected from his fellowship. In the confusion of the Civil War, he escaped to Paris where he endured great privation. In spite of his early Protestant training, he had long been inclining towards Catholicism, although he probably did not join the church until some time soon after 1644. Because of his friendship with Cowley, Henrietta Maria obtained a position for him as attendant to Cardinal Palotta at Rome. In 1650 he was made canon of the Holy House at Loretto, where he died in that same year.

While he was in exile, his friends collected his poems, The Delights of the Muses and Steps to the Temple, and had them published in one volume. In 1652 appeared his poems, Carmen Deo Nostro.

Crashaw is the most mystical of all the English poets. His poetry is often characterized by obscure, philosophizing, and abstract qualities as shown in the following quotation from Steps to the Temple:

O Mighty Nothing! unto thee,
Nothing, we owe all things that be;
God spake once when He all things made,
He saved all when He Nothing said.
The world was made of Nothing then;
Tis made by Nothing now again.[1]

Often his mystical fancy leads him to exaggeration and artificiality. Then his poems are filled with conceits, commonplace and almost ridiculous. He speaks of hope as "lumps of sugar" that

loose themselves and twine
Their subtle essence with the soul of wine.[2]

Other characteristics place him distinctly in the class of seventeenth century religious poets. His enthusiasm brings out a devout fervor in his verse, shown in this passionate description of "the judge of torments":

1. Crashaw; Poems. New York, 1905. (The Muses' Library. Edited by J.R. Tutin.) P. 41.
2. Ibid, 160.

His eyes, the sullen dens of Death and Night,
Startle the dull air with a dismal red:
Such his fell glances as the fatal light
Of staring cornets, that look kingdoms dead,
From his black nostrils and blue lips, in spite
Of Hell's own stink, a worser stench is spread.
His breath Hell's lightning is; and each deep groan
Disdains to think that Heaven thunders alone.[1]

Throughout all his poems may be seen a morbidness not unexpected in connection with his mysticism and feeling. The antiphon of The Office of the Holy Cross from Carmen Deo Nostro shows his melancholy spirit. He writes,

O sad sweet tree!
Woeful and joyful we
Both weep and sing in shade of thee
When the dear nails did lock
And graft into thy gracious stock
The hope, the health
The worth, the wealth
Of all the ransomed World, thou hadst the power
(In that propitious hour)
To poise each precious limb,
And prove how light the World was, when it weighed with Him.
Wide mayest thou spread
Thine arms, and with thy bright and blissful head
O'er look all Libanus. Thy lofty crown
The King Himself is; thou His humble throne,
Where yielding and yet conquering He
Proved a new path of patient victory:
When Wondering Death by death was slain
And our Captivity His captive ta'en.[2]

His choice of subject is in keeping with his melancholy spirit because he writes of sin and of what Christ has suffered for us. Very penitently he begs for help from God, imploring,

O my Saviour, make me see
How dearly Thou hast paid for me;
That lost again, my life may prove,
As then in death, so now in love.[3]

His fear of the Judgment Day is portrayed with powerful imagery in Dies Irae, Dies Illa, here quoted.

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1. Crashaw; Poems, 9.
2. Ibid, 94.
3. Ibid, 101.

O that fire! before whose face
Heaven and Earth shall find no place.
O those eyes! whose angry light
Must be the day of that dread night.

O that trump! whose blast shall run
An even round with the circling sun,
And urge the murmuring graves to bring
Pale mankind forth to meet his King.

Horror of Nature, Hell, and Death!
When a deep groan from beneath
Shall cry, "We come, we come," and all
The caves of Night answer one call.[1]

Crashaw, although a Catholic poet, shows this same characteristic morbidness that his Protestant contemporaries do in their poetry.

1. Crashaw; Poems, 115.

Another mystic was Henry Vaughan, whose life of quiet was very different from Crashaw's of trouble and exile. Vaughan was born in 1622 in Brechnock. After attending Jesus College, Oxford, he was sent to London to study law. This he gave up for the medical profession which he practiced first at Brecon and later at Scethog until his death in 1695. The Vaughan family, of ancient Welsh descent, belonged to the Royalist party. During the war Vaughan was imprisoned. It is not known, however, whether he belonged to the king's army or not, as the only evidence for this period of his life is his poetry.[1]

In 1646 was published his first book, Poems, with the Tenth Satire of Juvenal Englished, Olor Iscanus appearing in 1651. Because of a severe illness which he suffered about this time, most of his writings hereafter show effects of a deeper spiritual conviction. Silex Scintillans (1650) and his prose works, Flores Solitudinis and The Mount of Olives, were religious in character.

In his religious poetry, especially, may be seen one of his chief characteristics, mysticism. Canon Beeching says, "The world is to him no less than a veil of the Eternal Spirit, whose presence may be felt in any, even the smallest part."[2] In The Star Vaughan writes,

> Next, there's in it a restless, pure desire
> And longing for thy bright and vital fire,
> Desire that never will be quench'd
> None can be writh'd nor wrench'd.
> . . . . . .

1. Courthope; History of English Poetry, III, 252-253.
2. Henry Vaughan; Poems. New York, 1904. (The Muses' Library. Edited by E.K. Chambers with an Introduction by Canon Beeching.) Volume I, p. XLIII.

For where desire, celestial, pure desire,
Hath taken root, and grows, and doth not tire,
There God a commerce states, and sheds
His secret on their heads.

This is the heart he craves; and whose will
But give it Him, and grudge not, he shall feel
That God is true; as herbs unseen
Put on their youth and green.[1]

His poetry lacks the obscurity and pedantry that might be expected with his mysticism. The Storm is an example of the exquisite feeling and fancy of his mystic poems:

I see the use: and know my blood
Is not a sea,
But a shallow, bounded flood,
Though red as he;
Yet have I flows, as strong as his,
And boiling streams that rave
With the same curling force, and hiss,
As doth the mountain'd wave.

But when his waters billow thus,
Dark storms, and wind
Incite them to that fierce discuss
Else not inclin'd:
Thus and enlarg'd, enragèd air
Uncalms these to a flood;
But still the weather that's most fair
Breeds tempests in my blood.

Lord, then round me with weeping clouds
And let my mind
In quick blasts sigh beneath those shrouds,
And spirit-wind;
So shall that storm purge this recluse
Which sinful ease made foul,
And wind and water to Thy use
Both wash and wing my soul.[2]

After his illness Vaughan meditated a great deal upon sin and eternity. In The Retreat, a poem which is said to have influenced Wordsworth, the great mystic poet of the nineteenth century, he reflects upon his life before sin entered, comparing to it his lack of happiness in later years, as follows:

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1. Vaughan; Poems. 191-192.
2. Ibid, 69-70.

Happy those early days, when I
Shin'd in my angel infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, celestial thought;

. . . . . .

Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense
A sev'ral sin to ev'ry sense,
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness
O how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain,
Where first I left my glorious train;
From whence th' enlighten'd spirit sees
That shady city of palm trees.
But ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way!
Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came, return.[1]

He shows his fear of the fate that might befall him. His misery is depicted in this poem, The Day of Judgment, ending with an appeal for spirituality:

When through the North a fire shall rush
And roll into the East,
And like a fiery torrent brush
And sweep up South and West,-
When all shall stream and lighten round,
And with surprising flames
Both stars and elements confound,
And quite blot out their names,-
When Thou shalt spend Thy sacred store
Of thunders in that heat,
And low as e'er they lay before
Thy six-days' buildings beat,-
When like a scroll the heavens shall pass
And vanish clean away,
And nought must stand of that vast space
Which held up night, and day,-
When one loud blast shall rend the deep,
And from the womb of Earth
Summon up all that are asleep
Unto a second birth,-
When Thou shalt make the clouds Thy seat
And in the open air

1. Vaughan; Poems, 59-60.

The quick and dead, both small and great
Must to Thy bar repair;
O then it will be all too late
To say, "What shall I do?"
Repentance there is out of date,
And so is Mercy too.
Prepare, prepare me then, O God!
And let me now begin
To feel my loving Father's rod
Killing the man of sin!

Give me, O give me crosses here,
Still more afflictions lend
That pill, though bitter, is most dear
That brings health in the end.
Lord God! I beg nor friends nor wealth,
But pray against them both;
Three things I'd have, my soul's chief health,
And one of these seems loath:
A living faith, a heart of flesh,
The world an enemy;
This last will keep the first two fresh,
And bring me where I'd be.[1]

There are passages in Vaughan's poetry which show his attempt to make them didactic, but in this he is not very successful. Edward Dowden says that in Rules and Lessons Vaughan "loses himself ever and anon in pure delight and wonder"[2] in trying to be edifying. His expressions are often uncouth, but the element of teaching is there, as shown in the following quotation:

Yet never sleep the sun up. Prayer should
Dawn with the day. There are set, awful hours
'Twixt Heaven and us. The manna was not good
After sun-rising; fa(i)r-day sullies flowers,
And heaven's gate opens when this world's
is shut.[3]

Although his usual nature is that of calm and peaceful meditation, there are times when his poems express passionate emotion. This is usually found in his treatment of his sin. His poem Distraction may be quoted to summarize Vaughan's

1. Vaughan; Poems, 288-289.
2. Dowden; Puritan and Anglican, 127.
3. Vaughan; Poems, 394.

characteristics of fervor and of meditative mysticism:

O knit me, that am crumbled dust! the heap
Is all dispers'd and cheap;
Give for a handful but a thought,
And it is bought:
Hadst Thou

Made me a star, a pearl, or a rainbow,
The beams I then had shot
My light had lessn'd not;
But now

I find myself the less the more I grow
The World
Is full of voices; man is call'd, and hurl'd
By each; he answers all,
Knows ev'ry note and call;
Hence, still

Fresh dotage tempts, or old usurps his will,
Yet hadst Thou clipp'd my wings, when coffin'd in
This quicken'd mass of sin
And saved that light, which freely Thou
Didst then bestow
I fear

I should have spurn'd, and said Thou didst forbear:
Or that thy store was less:
But now since Thou didst bless
So much,
O grieve, my God! that Thou hast made me such
I grieve?

O, yes! Thou know'st I do; come, and relieve,
And tame, and keep down with Thy light,
Dust that would use and dim my sight!
Lest left alone too long
Amidst the noise and throng,
Oppressed I,
Striving to save the whole, by parcels die.[1]

John Milton, next to Shakespeare the greatest poet of the English language, was of a deeply serious nature. That he was intensely interested in religion is shown by the fact that his masterpiece and several other poems were written on this subject. He had long intended to write the great

1. Vaughan; Poems, 46-47.

work which he began after his retirement from public life at the time of the Restoration. That he should choose the fall of man as his subject is only natural because he believed that "scriptural history was of more universal and enthralling interest"[1] than other topics. Paradise Lost is an allegorical epic treated with wonderful imagination and majesty, and written as Milton states in the poem,

> That, to the highth of this great argument,
> I may assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.[2]

Paradise Regained is a much shorter and less powerful poem, but its artistic quality is remarkable. Its fame depends also upon the loftiness with which we are told that for us Christ

> by vanquishing
> Temptation, has regained lost Paradise.[3]

His third great, religious poem, Samson Agonistes, dramatic in form but not in spirit, is the story which Milton had always thought worthy of being treated in an English tragedy.

His religion, interesting and curious, combines different views, some not found in any other of these poets. He occupies a position by himself. An Anglican tendency is shown in one of his first poems, On the Morning of Christ's Nativity. The Puritans were emphasizing simplicity in worship and objected even to a celebration of Christmas. Milton introduces his hymn with this stanza:

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1. Chambers's Cyclopedia of English Literature. New Edition by David Patrick. Philadelphia, 1910. Volume I, p.690.
2. John Milton; Poetical Works. Edited by David Masson. New York, 1893. Volume II. Paradise Lost, Book I. ll.24-26.
3. Ibid, Paradise Regained, IV, ll. 607-608.

Say, heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the heav'n, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?[1]

Later in the same poem he describes the praise in honor of Christ's birth. Such praise was pleasing to the Anglicans who cultivated the spirit of church worship.

Milton was brought up in Puritan surroundings and served the Commonwealth faithfully, but many of his ideas the Puritans would hardly have defended. He seems to have gone farther than they did in insistence upon freedom from tyranny. As portrayed in Paradise Lost, his idea concerning the original state of man is not the Calvinistic doctrine. That man was created good and not evil, as was the general theory, he writes in these lines:

Attend! That thou art happy, owe to God;
That thou continuest such, owe to thyself,
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
This was that caution given thee,-be advised
God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee; but to persevere
He left it in thy power - ordained thy will
By nature free, not over-ruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity.[2]

The blame for our sin, however, is not placed upon God because man was made free also, as he states later:

Within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his power;
Against his will he can receive no harm.
But God left free the Will; for what obeys
Reason is free,- and Reason he made right,
But bid her well be ware, and still erect,
Lest by some fair appearing good surmised
She dictates false, and misinform the Will
To do what God expressly hath forbid.[3]

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1. Milton; On the Morning of Christ's Nativity, ll. 15-21.
2. Ibid, Paradise Lost, V, ll. 520-528.
3. Ibid, IX, ll. 348-356.

In book III God says,

> I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.[1]

Man fell, sinning because he willed to do the act. Milton's belief in the right of divorce for incompatibility was, of course, unorthodox. Likewise was his repudiation of the Trinity. His differing from the Puritans in these last two respects was brought out more in his prose works than in his poetry.

Puritan characteristics are evident in his poems. He was of an austere nature, in keeping with his belief that his outward life should show his inner divinity. His aversion to intemperance and his love of honor in man and of purity in woman he brings out in both Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes. In the latter poem Samson severely rebukes Dalila, who typifies the sinful woman:

> Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
> Take to thy wicked deed: which when thou seest
> Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
> Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
> Confess it feign'd, weakness is thy excuse,
> And I believe it, weakness to resist
> Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
> What Murtherer, what Traytor, Parricide,
> Incestuous, Sacrilegious, but may plead it?
> All wichedness is weakness: that plea therefore
> With God or Man will gain three no remission.[2]

Written in epic and dramatic forms, these poems offer but few instructions as to our conduct; and in the few, he does not assume the terrifying attitude that this may be our last day. With simple dignity he says,

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1. Milton; Paradise Lost, III, ll. 98-99.
2. Ibid, Samson Agonistes, ll. 825-835.

Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st
Live well; how long or short permit to Heaven.[1]

Paradise Regained, in telling of Christ's victory over temptation, is said to be one of the most edifying and full-bodied poems in any literature.[2]

His idea concerning the relative values of this world and of the next, as given in the following lines from Paradise Regained, is the usual Puritan one:

> Thou neither dost persuade me to seek wealth
> For empire's sake, nor empire to affect
> For glory's sake, by all thy argument.
> For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
> The people's praise, if always praise unmixed?
> And what the people but a herd, confused,
> A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
> Things vulgar, and well weighed, scarce worth
> the praise?
> They praise and they admire they know not what,
> And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
> And what delight to be by such extolled,
> To live upon their tongues, and be their talk?
> Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise-
> His lot who dares be singularly good.
> The intelligent among them and the wise
> Are few, and glory scarce of few is raised.
> This is true glory and renown - when God,
> Looking on the Earth, with approbation mark,
> The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
> To all his Angels, who with true applause
> Recount his praises.[3]

Milton, although differing from the other writers because of his surpassing poetical genius and because of his unusual combination of religious views, resembles them in his Puritan characteristics,- asceticism and a constant regard for the next life.

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1. Milton; Paradise Lost, XI, ll. 553-554.
2. Ibid, Introduction by David Masson.
3. Ibid, Paradise Regained. III, ll. 44-64.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: THE PERVASIVE INFLUENCE OF PURITANISM

The religious experiences of these poets were not alike. Their various temperaments and conditions of life determined to a large extent the kind of religious poetry which they wrote. Doctor Loe, with his interests centered in his church in Hamburg, metaphrased psalms and prayers into simple language so that the Bible and its lessons might be understood easily. Giles Fletcher, Drummond, and Vaughan led rather quiet lives, their poetry tempered somewhat, however, by the troublesome times. The poetry of Quarles is full of conceits, showing the artificial style of his age. Donne and Herbert spent years in struggle before they finally gave themselves up to religious work. Crashaw's Catholic views fostered his mysticism; and Milton was inspired by the seriousness and dignity of a spiritual life.

In spite of this individualistic tendency there are some characteristics common to all. The deeper, even the melancholy aspects of religion appeal to these seventeenth century men. Sin, death, Christ's sacrifice, and "otherworldliness" are favorite topics. In both lyric and narrative poetry didactic passages are included. Often the personal relation to his God is dwelt upon by the poet.

Although the most important force of the time was the struggle between Anglicanism and Puritanism, and although everyone was vitally interested in the issue, the poems of these writers, Church of England men for the greater part, do not deal directly with the question. Poetry is hardly

fit for sectarian controversy. The very characteristics, however, found in all their writings are those of Puritanism. The study of the religious experiences of the poets of the seventeenth century proves, therefore, that in poetry, as well as in church history, politics, and prose writings, Puritanism was the dominating influence of the age.

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